"YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN"
The U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on Prisoners of War/Missing in Action

Address by

A. Denis Clift
President
National Defense Intelligence College

George Bush Presidential Library Foundation
College Station, Texas

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In *A World Transformed*, President George H.W. Bush and his National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft captured the rolling drama and impact of key international events of the late l980s-early 1990s culminating in the collapse of the Soviet Union. On Christmas Day 1991, Mikhail Gorbachev called the President at Camp David to advise that he was resigning that day as President of the Soviet Union. In their conversation and reaffirmation of friendship, the President told Gorbachev that he would "deal with respect – openly, forcefully, and hopefully progressively – with the leader of the Russian Republic and the leaders of these other republics: [of the former USSR].[1]

Less than three months later, President Bush and President Boris Yeltsin seized the moment, moving openly, forcefully, and progressively to create a joint U.S. Russian commission to account for U.S. and Soviet servicemen still missing and unaccounted for from past conflicts – from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Cold War reconnaissance missions. This was a humanitarian initiative of first-rank importance, an initiative true to our principle of honor of never willingly leaving a serviceman behind, an initiative bringing a light of hope for the first time in decades to so many families of the missing.

If creation of the commission was an important humanitarian initiative, it was an initiative rarer than hens' teeth in terms of the speed with which it was implemented by the executive and legislative branches. Very early in 1992, the chairman and vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs had been in Moscow, and the possibility of creating some sort of joint parliamentary committee had surfaced during their call on President Yeltsin. They reported this to the White House upon their return to Washington, and President Bush said let's do it, do it now.

There were no hearings, no lobbying, no new legislation spelling out membership, staff, budget, and reporting deadlines. Deputy Secretary of State Larry Eagleburger called retired Ambassador Malcolm Toon and asked him if he would take the lead for the President. Toon said yes. He was a great choice: a PT-boat skipper in the Pacific during World War II, a career diplomat with three tours in Moscow. His first as a young Foreign Service officer had included a few hours under KGB detention; his last had been as the United States' sharp, highly skilled, no-nonsense ambassador.

The charter creating the commission was a White House Statement by the Press Secretary – a press release, nothing more – dated March 20, 1992, which read:

> The United States and Russia have established a joint commission to investigate unresolved cases of Prisoners of War and Missing in Action dating from the Second World War, including the Korean and Vietnam conflicts. The creation of this commission underscores the commitment of both the United States and Russia to work together in a spirit of friendship to uncover the fate of missing servicemen on both sides. This effort symbolizes the determination of the Administration to resolve outstanding issues from the Cold War period and is another step in developing our new cooperative relationship with Russia.
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> Former Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Malcolm Toon, has been designated the President's representative and Chairman of the U.S. delegation to this commission. The commission also will include Senators John Kerry and Robert Smith and Congressmen Pete Peterson and John Miller. The Russian Delegation will be chaired by General Dmitri Volkogonov, a senior advisor to President Yeltsin. The first meeting of the joint commission will be held March 26-28 in Moscow.[2]

That was March 20th. I was Chief of Staff of the Defense Intelligence Agency at the time. The Director of DIA was on the phone two mornings later to advise that there had been

consultations with the Secretary of Defense and the Director of Central Intelligence, and that I had been recommended as a commissioner. Would I accept? I said yes. This was announced in a Defense Memorandum for Correspondents on the 24th. Other U.S. commissioners were selected: the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/MIA, two regional Deputy Assistant Secretaries of State, and the Deputy National Archivist. We were wheels up for Moscow a day later.

Retired Colonel General Dmitri Volkogonov received our delegation most cordially. Volkogonov was a man professionally on the rebound under Yeltsin; he had had a remarkable life. During Stalin's reign of terror in the 1930s, his father had been shot and his mother banished to Siberia. He was raised as a Communist youth, entered the Soviet Army, fought as a tanker in the Second World War, and following the war shifted his focus to psychological and ideological warfare. Volkogonov was also an historian, and as he researched his doubts about the Soviet past grew and appeared in his writings. Following the publication of his critical history of Stalin he was dismissed from the Army and denounced as a traitor. As the Soviet Union was collapsing, he became one of Boris Yeltsin's closest advisers.

When Yeltsin became President, Volkogonov was named Defense Adviser to the President. He had the Russian President's mandate and the clout of the new Kremlin to make the Commission work. He was also, we would learn, in his own losing battle with cancer. He had given himself his own deadlines to make the Commission produce results. His presence and his role were central and essential to the progress we realized in the Commission's first three years. Seated across the table from us with General Volkogonov on that March 26, 1992 were senior

representatives – general officers, colonels, civilian archivists – representing the MVD, the GRU, the KGB's successor SVR and FSS organizations for foreign and domestic intelligence, and representatives of the Presidential Archives and the archives of the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Defense. Their enthusiasm was muted. If there was one shared expression on their faces it was a look of wonderment, of disbelief that this meeting was happening. "This is not possible," their faces read, "this Ambassador, these Congressmen, these Americans demanding a free run through our military and intelligence files."

At the first break in the talks on the first morning, Colonel Vyacheslav Mazurov of the KGB/now SVR crossed to our side of the table, introduced himself, and asked "Which one of you is with the CIA?" My colleagues and I advised that I was representing the entire intelligence community. He looked at me, smiled, said "No, I know you are DIA. Which one is CIA; CIA would not pass up this collection opportunity."

We were not in Moscow, not in Russia, to collect intelligence. We were there for the sole humanitarian purpose of accounting for our missing and helping Russia to account for their missing. Our first objective was to determine if any American was being held against his will anywhere in the former USSR; second, to determine the fates of unaccounted-for U.S. servicemen; and third, to help Russia and the other former Soviet republics determine the fates of their missing. While Colonel Mazurov would remain a doubter until a car crash tragically ended his life, Ambassador Toon and his commissioners were clear and precise on this central point both in our formal talks and in meetings with the media. Our staff was clear on this point. We were on a humanitarian mission.

Early in the Commission's work, President Yeltsin stated definitively in writing that no Americans, either military or civilian were being held against their will on the territory of Russia. Volkogonov so testified before the U.S. Senate.[3] A week after this letter from the Russian President to the Senate stating that there were no Americans being held, Yeltsin charged the issue dramatically – and mistakenly – stating during an interview that some Americans had been taken from Vietnam to the USSR and that some might still be alive there, this en route to Washington for his first summit meeting with President Bush in June 1992.[4]

As the dust settled from this statement, Yeltsin qualified his remarks on Capitol Hill and in his press conference with the President saying that he would leave no stone unturned in determining if there were any Americans in the former USSR and that a highly capable commission had been created to determine the facts.[5] As a result of U.S. field research, interviews, media appeals, alleged 'live-sighting' investigations, and examination of growing numbers of documents, the U.S. side -- while keeping the issue open – has found no basis to date to dispute the official Russian statements that no Americans were being held in the former USSR.

By the time of our return to Russia in September and again in December 1992 for the second and third sessions of the commission, there was a growing flow of documents from U.S. and Russian archives. Late in 1992, Representative Sam Johnson of Texas replaced Representative Miller as a commissioner. Toon and Volkogonov held joint press conferences after each session, and as a commission we began our fact-finding travels across the Russian Federation and the other republics. We scheduled a press conference at every stop advising of

the humanitarian purpose of our visit, asking for anyone with information to come forward to our Embassy.

In September, our schedule included the regional MVD Headquarters in Khabarovsk. Our meeting with veterans was to be on the ninth floor. Our elevator went dark and stopped somewhere between the 7th and 8th. One of our escorts starting yelling from inside the elevator. Then there was the sound of feet running, climbing, voices, a woman calling out. "How many of you are there?" There was an in-the-dark headcount.

"Eight!"

"That's too many!"

"We know, we yelled in English and Russian. Get us out!"

Having defined the scope of the issues before the Commission, we agreed with the Russians to establish four standing working groups to pursue the different dimensions of the task - working groups on World War Two, Korea, Vietnam, and the Cold War, to include reconnaissance flights and the Soviet conflict in Afghanistan. For the first year of our work, the Army with newly created Task Force Russia provided the U.S. staffing. This responsibility then shifted to the Prisoner of War and Missing in Action staff in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. We created a Moscow staff office attached to the Embassy to facilitate interviews, field research, and coordination with the Russian side. The Russians, in turn, had a commission staff attached to the Kremlin and reporting directly to Volkogonov.

In April 1995, with Ambassador Toon temporarily unable to travel because of family illness, I led the U.S. side and initialed the draft of the Commission's first report with Volkogonov in Moscow. Toon and his Russian co-chairman formally signed the first report in Washington later that year, just before Volkogonov's death in December 1995.

With that opening chronology in mind, what has the Commission accomplished? I will begin with some general observations, move to results coming from the four working groups, and then to the unfinished agenda. Our work has taken us to all of the former republics of the Soviet Union. When Ambassador Toon, Congressman Peterson and I were in Tbilisi, Georgia, we had a long discussion with President Edvard Shevardnadze. The skin on his face and hands was a shiny pink, still healing from an assassination attempt allegedly by Russian hands. He made two major points. He told us that when he was Soviet Foreign Minister, Secretary of State Jim Baker had asked him to intercede with the Vietnamese to find out if American POWs were still being held or had been held following the conflict. The Vietnamese, he said, were adamant that no POWs remained on their soil; they assured him that all had been returned at the end of the conflict.

Shevardnadze gestured toward his face and held out his hands. "Look at me," he said. "You should not doubt my word. I have no allegiance to those who have just tried to kill me." He said that as Foreign Minister and as a longtime, high-ranking Communist Party official, that he had never once heard even a whisper or hint that Americans were being held on Soviet territory. He said that such a secret – however secret – would have leaked in the leadership of the Soviet Communist Party. The secretive Soviet leadership, he said, lived on gossip.

I have had the privilege of meeting with many high-ranking Russian generals and admirals and former Soviet generals and admirals. I would offer the following insights on their assessment of our mission. My first counterpart on the Cold War Working Group was General Lieutenant Anatolyi Kryuschkin, a deputy director with the Federal Security Service, a soldier who took great pride in his service as a member of the Honor Guard at Lenin's Tomb early in his career. At a moment in our talks when I was pressing for more forceful action to follow up on information relating to an RB-47 crew member unaccounted for from a 1960 shootdown, he stopped me. "Denysa," he said, "why do you care about this single man? He's dead, most certainly he is dead. We have millions and millions of Russians missing unidentified, missing, buried in mass graves. The world must go on."

I replied "We do care. As a nation we care. We have a commitment to each and every missing serviceman, and a commitment to their families." He studied me for a moment, silent, and said "Harasho, good. I understand; I agree. We will do as you ask."

During a talk with the Defense Minister of Belarus, a former Soviet general, his eyes suddenly welled with tears. "Yours is a noble mission," he said, and went on to describe how he and his brothers had not been allowed by the Soviet regime to search for their missing father following the Second World War. The Deputy Defense Minister of Tajikistan, a former Spetznaz general still wearing his Soviet BDUs with blue and white striped dickie, repeated the words "noble mission" during our talks in Dushanbe.

In the years of General Volkogonov's chairmanship, he and his assistant Colonel Sergei Osipov pushed the security, intelligence, defense, and foreign ministry archives to cooperate. We have had differing degrees of success. By the year 2001, more than 16,000 pages of documentation, much of it highly classified, had been acquired and analyzed, and more than 3,000 interviews with veterans, current and former government officials, and other individuals across Russia had been conducted.[6]

We have learned that at the end of World War II the Soviets repatriated some 28,000 U.S. prisoners of war from German POW camps under chaotic conditions, and as a general policy no American was held against his will. However, there were some 40 POWs who did not return, and we continue to try to resolve their fates. The Russians have led us to the crash site in Kamchatka of a U.S. Navy PV-1 Ventura missing since 1944 when it took off from Attu on a bombing mission of Japan's Northern Kuriles. Bone fragments have been recovered from the site and returned for DNA analysis. From our archival holdings, we have helped Russia to determine that more than 450,000 Soviet citizens they had counted as missing had in fact by the end of the war moved to live in different countries.

We entered our discussions on the Korean War missing quite certain that downed U.S. pilots and crew and soldiers on the ground had been captured and transferred to the gulag in the USSR. The Russians would agree that there was a great deal of circumstantial evidence, to include information provided by former Soviet citizens. Yet, despite archival searches, visits to prisons, detention camps, and psychiatric hospitals, and interviews of hundreds of retired Soviet Korean War veterans, the commission has not yet been able to find firm evidence. As chairman

of the Korean War Working Group, Congressman Sam Johnson, himself a former prisoner of war, has pressed hard. In repeated meetings, he insisted, flatly insisted, that U.S. researchers be given access to the Russian military archives at Poldolsk, and he succeeded. There, our researchers have found detailed information on the air war in Korea: reports of air combat engagements, hand-drawn maps, pilots' statements, and eye witnesses at crash sites. Copies of more than 6,000 documents and 300 photographs were requested and released to the U.S. side. This data has led to the clarification of loss, and in many cases, the fate of 140 U.S. airmen shot down during the war. As a result of our researchers' efforts we have also clarified the fates of 43 Soviet airmen lost during the war.

The Vietnam conflict thus far has been the driest hole in our work. I have mentioned the negative findings flowing from Shevardnadze's inquiries on behalf of Secretary Baker. During their years in the Congress, first, Representative Pete Peterson, a former POW, and then Senator Bob Smith, relentless in his POW/MIA work, chaired the Vietnam Working Group. The Russians have gone into great detail with us about the very cool, arms-length relationship the North Vietnamese had with the USSR during the conflict. Yes, they provided the Vietnamese with weapons and technical assistance. Yes, they brought back captured U.S. weapons and equipment. They never brought American servicemen back into the USSR. With one or two exceptions, the Vietnamese never gave them access to captured Americans. Interviews of former Soviet veterans who served in Vietnam have yielded nothing.

Before General Volkogonov died, he deeded his personal papers to the U.S. Library of Congress. In 1998, Senator Smith arranged for Commission staff to have access to the

collection, which we were to learn included a six-page autobiographical sketch titled "A Little More About Myself." Written in 1994, it revealed his discovery in the Russian archives of a late-1960s document that assigned the KGB the task of "delivering knowledgeable Americans to the USSR for intelligence purposes." Volkogonov wrote that he was shown a copy of the actual plan by the then Chief of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service Primakov, who claimed that the plan had never been implemented. In his brief memoir, Volkogonov expressed skepticism writing that it remained "a secret I was unable to penetrate."[7]

We have received very few documents relating to the Vietnam conflict from the Russian side. We believe that there is information of importance to the Commission's work to be found in both the military archives and the GRU archives, and access to these archives is one of our standing requests. I will comment further when I sum up where we have been, are now, and the future direction we wish to take.

From the outset of the commission's work, I have been privileged to serve as U.S. chair of the Cold War Working Group accounting for the missing from Cold War reconnaissance flights and the USSR's 1980s conflict in Afghanistan. I have had the benefit for several of these years of having a retired Soviet rear admiral – Admiral Boris Gavrilovich Novyy, a Yankee-Class ballistic missile submarine skipper in his time – as a member of my team carrying out research in Moscow and across the Russian Federation.

By all accounts, the Cold War Working Group has produced many of the most important humanitarian results of the commission's work thus far. We have done a lot for the Russians.

They have reciprocated. The Russians could not account for hundreds of their servicemen who were lost in Afghanistan. To assist, we conducted a very detailed review of the reporting from that theater in the 80s, screening diplomatic messages from our embassies and consulates in Pakistan and Afghanistan, as well as attache and intelligence reporting from the theater. We were looking for specific references to engagements between Soviet ground and air forces and the Mujahedin, specific reports, specific dates, specific locations of shootdowns, losses of armor. Having redacted information that was not relevant to the actual losses of Soviet personnel, we provided a great volume of material to the Russian side enabling them to reduce the number of those unaccounted for from 350 to 287.

When we embarked on the Commission's work in 1992, we asked the Services and Joint Staff to identify those Cold War reconnaissance missions that we should raise with the Russians. There had been thousands of such flights over four-and-one-half decades. There had been many losses, but with the exception of ten flights, we had been able to account for the fates of all crew members in those losses. In our early meetings with the Russians, we presented as much detail about each of the ten losses as possible, acknowledging for the first time that each of the aircraft had been on an intelligence-gathering mission. Soon thereafter, the Russians started providing us with valuable archival documents relating to several of the shootdowns, including top secret reports from fleet commanders and Defense Ministers to Stalin and Khrushchev providing details of the deadly encounters. The first incident on our list was the shootdown of a US Navy PB4Y2 Privateer over the Baltic in April 1950. Early on, the Russians gave us a copy of an article on the shootdown written for *Pravda* with Stalin's extensive hand-editing on the typescript.

The fourth U.S. reconnaissance loss on our agenda was an Air Force RB-29, shot down over waters north of Japan on October 7, 1952. The crew of eight included Captain John Robertson Dunham, a 1950 Naval Academy graduate. In 1993, a retired KGB maritime border guard sailor named Vasilyi Saiko, who had heard one of our appeals from his home in the Ukraine, was flown to Moscow to sit across from me in the offices of the former Central Committee of the Communist Party. He said he and his crewmates had seen the shootdown, and that his cutter had been ordered to the crash site. On scene, he had been the petty officer in charge of the small boat put over the side to investigate debris. The plane had gone under by then with aviation gasoline still bubbling to the surface. There was a tangled parachute, and a body inside the parachute, and he had fallen into the sea as they worked to bring the body into the boat.

Back aboard the cutter, he had first gone below to wash off the gasoline and then come back on deck. As they were heading back into port, he had lifted the corner of the tarp covering the body and had taken a ring from the dead aviator's hand. He then reached into his pocket, 41 years later, and handed me the ring, a Naval Academy ring with the name John Robertson Dunham engraved on the inside.

Working with the Russian side, we were then able to find the report of two Border Guards officers who had witnessed the burial of the American on Yuri Island, a small uninhabited island north of Japan. The report included a roughly drawn map with an X approximating the burial site. We mounted two expeditions with the Russians and on the second recovered a coffin with skeletal remains and fragments of cloth bearing a stars and stripes patch.

DNA confirmed the remains were those of Captain Dunham. On August 2, 1995, I would watch a B-52 fly low overhead in final tribute as Captain Dunham was laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery. His former wife and his daughter, who had been six-weeks old at the time of his loss and now in her early 40s, were in attendance. Later that year, family members of the seven other crew members from that flight gathered in Arlington to unveil a memorial stone. The commission had helped eight families to bring closure.

On the grounds of the National Security Agency's National Cryptologic Museum at Fort Meade, Maryland, a C-130 aircraft and a plaque recall the shootdown of a sister ship C-130 and her 17-member crew over Soviet Armenia on September 2, 1958. The aircraft crashed on a rocky hillside some 55 kilometers northwest of the capital of Yerevan. There was a furious fire. Six sets of remains were handed over to U.S. representatives at the Soviet-Turkish border. Eleven members of the crew remained unaccounted for. There were rumors that at least one parachute had been seen at the time of the attack.

I would interview a General Major Sozinov, the retired commander of the Transcaucasus Air Defense Regiment that had guided the attack. He said that his signals intelligence assets had picked up the C-130 as they often picked up U.S. intelligence collection missions as they flew along the Soviet-Turkish border down to the Iranian border and back. This aircraft, however, had crossed into Soviet airspace, and two pairs of MiG-17s had been sent up to challenge. The C-130, he said, did not respond to warning shots. The first pair of MiGs had been ordered to attack with machine-gun fire. Smoke started streaming from the U.S. aircraft. The second pair attacked. The large tail assembly was shot off, and the C-130 dove sharply into

the ground. Subsequently, in June 1994, I would interview Soviet pilot First Lieutenant Viktor Lopatov, who had participated in the second wave of the attack. He said that he did not witness the actual crash, as he had been caught in the doomed C-130's slipstream and had been fighting to save his own aircraft.

The Russian-side of the Commission gave us copies of MiG gun-camera photography they had discovered in the Poldolsk archives. I would note that this is the only photography of any of the reconnaissance flight shootdowns that we have been able to discover. The photography confirmed the air defense commander's description of the attack.

In August 1993, the Commission traveled to Armenia. We were joined in the capital Yerevan by Ms. Lorna Bourg, sister of Airman Archie Bourg who was an unaccounted-for member of the lost crew. We drove up through the hills to the crash site near the village of Sashashen. Villagers, who had witnessed the event 35 years before, had been assembled to talk to us. Several ragged pieces of the C-130's wing skin had been collected many years before and could now be seen as part of the livestock fences. Ms. Bourg, accompanied by a member of the U.S. embassy staff, was walking with us toward the site, when her eyes spotted something on the red, rocky ground. She paused to touch it with the toe of her shoe – a piece of gray metal. She picked it up and froze. She was holding one of her brother's dog tags.

The villagers described the shootdown, the plane's tail breaking off, the plunge to the ground, and the fire that had lasted for hours. None had seen a parachute. They suggested that maybe as the tail section had come to earth it had been mistaken for a parachute. We had with us

forensic experts, members of the Army's Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii. With lines and stakes, they divided the crash site into a grid, and then over the next two days painstaking sifted surface rock, soil and subsoil through the fine, meshed, sifting trays they had brought with them.

These young servicemen serving at Central Identification Laboratory are among the unsung heroes of our quest for and accounting for the missing. They returned to Hawaii with some 2,000 bone fragments, tooth fragments, life support equipment, personal effects and aircraft wreckage. As a result of many months of DNA analysis that followed, it was determined that all of the members of the crew still unaccounted for had perished in the crash. On September 2, 1998, these remains were interred in a single casket ceremony at Arlington – this time with a C-130 flying low in salute of lost comrades.

We have continued to work the other Cold War reconnaissance losses. In late 1997, I was in Kaliningrad having arranged to interview a number of the Soviet Navy's Baltic Sea veterans about the 1950 loss of the Privateer off the coast of Latvia – the report of which Stalin had edited for *Pravda*. My staff and I would be told by the veterans that a massive search had been mounted in the Baltic – 45 ships, two months, but no recovery of the aircraft. The lifeboats had been found floating, empty. A year before my visit, a veteran had told one of our staff that he had helped raise wreckage and saw four bodies pulled from the wreckage. Now, another veteran told us that they had raised the tail section, covered it with a tarp, and on Stalin's orders had it shipped to Moscow. We have since been told of four possible burial sites in the formerly closed naval port of Baltysk.

The work continues. In my dealings with the Russians, where they have said "Yes," we have moved ahead. Where they have said "No," we have recorded that no. I have instructed my staff never to consider any of our work formally closed. We on the commission are fact finders. It is the responsibility of each of the Services, working with each of their next-of-kin offices, to make a formal finding of the final status of each serviceman.

A brief footnote on the visit to Kaliningrad is in order. My flight arrived in the heavy snowfall of an early afternoon. Two members of the staff had preceded me, and they were pleased to report that the naval base commander wished to honor me with a *banya* that evening – a Russian banquet with all the toasts, to be followed immediately by a steam bath with birch branch lashings, and then a plunge into icy water.

I had earlier agreed to a proposal from Embassy Moscow to have an Associated Press correspondent and an AP photographer cover our work throughout my visit. I knew they had arrived and were looking forward to the assignment. I looked at the staff brain trust standing before me in the airport lobby and said "Guys, just what kind of story are you trying to produce here?" They told me the commander would be insulted if I turned down his *banya*. I said "We'll do the *banya*, but we will have a business meeting first – with our clothes on – talk through our plans for the following day's program – with the AP covering the meeting and invited to the festivities afterwards. It was a good afternoon and evening. An equally good AP article on the commission's work appeared in papers across the country soon thereafter.

Looking to the future, it is useful to bear in mind that most commissions with both executive and legislative membership have a specific lifespan of one to two years. With their reports submitted, they end by date certain. In two months, the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIA will mark its 15th anniversary. Over its years to date, it has done pathfinding work – a lasting credit to the statesmanship of Presidents Bush and Yeltsin. It has produced some important answers, provided clarifying information, comfort, and closure to many families. The White House press release of March 20, 1992 remains its only documented charter.

In 1998, Ambassador Toon retired as U.S. Co-chairman. He was followed first by Major General Roland LaJoie, U.S. Army retired, and then by Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Jerry Jennings. General Major Vladimir Zolotarev replaced General Volkogonov on the Russian side.

Since the turn of the century, the Commission's work has slowed, slowed decidedly. Responsibility for the Commission on the Russian side moved from the Kremlin to the Ministry of Defense. Following the completion of the Commission's second report in 2001, it was clear from the Russian side that they felt they had done that which could be done. They knew that we had not obtained answers to all the questions asked. They knew that there was circumstantial evidence – reports from the Gulag, reports from Soviet citizens about specific incidents – that deserved determined follow-up, but such follow-up did not appear to be forthcoming. If there was more information to be had, it might still be unavailable under lock and key in operational files. The words of a former Soviet Army colonel we interviewed the very first year were

instructive. "It will take another generation," he said, "before much of the information you are still seeking will become available."

While the plenary sessions of commissioners have halted for the moment, we in the United States have kept this work as a priority. There has never been a suggestion of formally ending this humanitarian quest for answers. The majority of the U.S. effort in recent years has been at the staff level – the men and women in the Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Office in the Department of Defense, and the staff in the field office in Embassy Moscow.

On April 25, 2006, President George W. Bush named a new U.S. Co-Chairman, Mississippi State University President Robert "Doc" Fogelsong, a distinguished, retired four-star Air Force general. In late November 2006, the President wrote President Putin to underscore the value of the Commission and to express the hope that he would again elevate the Commission's work to the presidential level on the Russian side.

Doc Fogelsong has been to Moscow to urge the Russians to work with him to lift the commission back up to a stature befitting the 1992 presidential initiative. The head of our Moscow field office, Lieutenant Colonel Michael O'Hara, was with him in these talks. O'Hara is a superb field researcher. He is fluent in Russian. He drives himself hard. His license plates read A&M 86. He's a Texas Aggie.

Thank you.

Footnotes

1. George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, Vintage Books, New York, 1999, pp. 559-560.

2. Statement by the White House Press Secretary, The White House, Washington, D.C., March 20, 1992.

3. Report of the U.S. Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs, Executive Summary, Washington, D.C., January 13, 1993, p. 45.

4. "Yeltsin Appeals for American Aid," Michael Dobbs and Don Oberdorfer, *The Washington Post*, June 18, 1992.

5. The President's News Conference with President Boris Yeltsin of Russia, The White House, June 17, 1992.

6. Report of the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs, Washington, D.C., April 2001, p. 6.

7. Ibid, p. 74.